



STATE SENATOR
BRUCE PATTERSON
IN THE LOOP ★

Serving the 7th District | P.O. Box 30036 | Lansing, MI 48909

PHONE: (517) 373-0793 | TOLL FREE: 1-866-262-7307 | FAX: (517) 373-9228

WEB: www.senate.michigan.gov/patterson | E-MAIL: senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov

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Senate votes to make school buses safer

Legislation to help ensure student safety on school buses was passed by the Senate last week. Senate Bill 932 would update the Pupil Transportation Act to comply with federal regulations for school buses and school bus drivers, and to conform to developments regarding construction of, and equipment on, school buses.

The bill would: require school bus drivers to be in compliance with federal drug and alcohol testing; require slip resistant material for aisles and stairwells; and require conformity to federal regulations for windshield wipers and washers, mirrors and lights on school buses. The bill also adds clear visibility guidelines for bus stops to ensure students can board the bus in a safe environment.

Senate education panel holds local hearings on graduation requirements

The Senate Education Committee began a series of hearings throughout the state on proposed graduation requirements. The first hearing in Muskegon had a standing-room-only audience full of parents, educators and other interested persons. The Senate is considering a proposal from the state superintendent and State Board of Education that would implement graduation requirements beyond the half year of civics class now required. Michigan is among a handful of states that have minimal statewide graduation requirements. In Michigan, graduation requirements are left to local school boards.

**** Sen. Patterson to host Senate Education Committee in District ****

On Monday, February 27, Sen. Patterson will host Chairman Wayne Kuipers and the Education Committee at a special public hearing in Brownstown. The topic will be the proposed graduation requirements recently published by Superintendent Mike Flanagan. The meeting will open at 5:30pm. at Brownstown Middle School, 20135 Inkster Road, between Sibley and King Roads. Further notice will be coming.

Mobile-phone numbers protected under Senate bill

Legislation being considered by the Senate gives Michigan residents greater protection in keeping their mobile-phone numbers private. Sen. Patterson chaired hearings on Senate Bill 127, recommending passage. It requires that mobile-phone service providers receive written consent from subscribers before listing them in a nationwide directory. Major

mobile-phone service providers have discussed creating a directory of the more than 180 million U.S. cell-phone users. Consumers have dreaded that such a directory will potentially be used by telemarketers. Unknowingly, some mobile-phone users have consented to have their numbers included in a directory because their contracts include fine print that allows publication of their number.

Senate bill to protect domestic violence victims

Legislation designed to give domestic violence victims additional protection was introduced in the Michigan Senate recently. SB 1024 would classify the act of destroying telecommunication devices when a victim is trying to report the violence as a “criminal act.” A primary threat in domestic violence is the attempt to isolate the victim and to prevent the victim from seeking help. This legislation would make it easier for prosecutors to use destruction of phones and other devices in making their cases against the aggressor. Senate Bill 1024 is now with the Judiciary Committee on which Sen. Paterson is a member.

Background checks required for residential care employees

Legislation designed to protect senior citizens and vulnerable individuals in residential care facilities has been sent to the governor. The two-bill package would require residential care facilities to conduct criminal background checks on all potential employees, as well as obtain fingerprints on all current employees. Senate Bills 621 and 622 would restrict the individuals who have regular direct access or provide direct services to patients or adult foster care facility residents.

Under SB 622 an individual cannot work, independently contract or be granted clinical privileges in an adult foster care facility if convicted of a violent felony, unless 15 years have lapsed since all terms and conditions of the sentence, parole and probation were completed. Employing individuals convicted of certain violent misdemeanors within the past 10 years would also be prohibited. Other offenses are also prohibited for various periods.

SB 621 would essentially do the same for health care facilities or agencies, including nursing homes, county medical care facilities, hospices, hospitals that provide ‘swing bed’ recuperative services, homes for the aged, and home health agencies. The bills also establish penalties for licensees, owners, administrators or operators of a health facility that knowingly and willfully fails to conduct criminal history checks.

Canton Community Foundation Tributes

Sen. Patterson attended the recent annual Winter Ball of the Canton Community Foundation, on January 20th, and presented tributes to two members, noted for their outstanding contributions in service to the community.



Canton Twp. Supervisor Tom Yack, Sen. Patterson, Richard Lewiston, and CCF Director, Joan Noricks. Robert Zulker is not shown here.

Tribute recipients were Richard Lewiston and Robert Zulker. Rep. Phil LaJoy had planned to assist in the presentations, until his first granddaughter, Lena Catherine LaJoy, was born that afternoon. Congratulations, all!

Office Hours schedule for February, 2006

On **Tuesdays** of each week, Sue Trussell, Sen. Patterson's District Representative, will hold office hours from 11:00am to 1:00pm at the following places:

February 14th Gibraltar City Hall, at 28002 North Gibraltar Road.

February 21st Canton Library

February 28th Grosse Île – Mochavation Café

Contact Information

Thank you for your interest in our current state issues. If you would like to receive future updates via e-mail, please contact my office at < senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov >.

You can also visit me in my Lansing office at 505 Farnum Building, just across S. Capitol Avenue from the state Capitol; or you can send me mail at P. O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909. Telephone (517) 373-7350 or (866) 262-7307; fax (517) 373-9228. I want to hear from you.

See the *Legislative Questionnaire* on the Website, too! Your responses are welcomed!